

Central Coventry Fire District

Board of Directors

January 15, 2008 - 7:00 pm

Central Coventry Fire Station 4

Minutes

1. Call to Order – 7:03 pm

2. Roll Call

President: Girard Bouchard – VP: Joe Bonn

Robert Crowe - Anna Mae Lapinski - Linda Giguere

Ron Gizzarelli - Elaine Hunt

Clerk: Tracy Hall

Treasurer: Tom LaColle

Tax Collector – Jeanne Graemiger

Chief Seltzer

Additional People present: Lt. Dave Gorman

**3. Approval of Minutes of the previous Board of Directors Meeting –
12/18/07**

Motion: Anna Mae Lapinski Seconded: Robert Crowe

All Vote Aye

4. Old Business

Property Appraisal – per Chief Seltzer in process – 30-60 days

Report from Tiered Pay Scale Committee

Mr. Bonn & Mrs. Giguere met with Lt. Gorman. Lt Gorman handed out information regarding the costs associated with bringing the 8 employees pay up now vs. waiting for April. Mr. Bonn & Lt Gorman went over the info. There are 4 Lieutenants currently receiving \$858.60 until April 1st when they will go up to the regular rate of \$902.41. The 2 new Lieutenants will start at \$902.41. There are 4 Privates currently receiving \$776.98 until April 1st when they will go up to the regular rate of \$858.60. They would like to go up to the regular rates now rather than waiting until April 1st. Lt. Gorman explained the tiered pay scale came about through the merger. Mr. LaColle asked if everyone was aware of this pay scale when the merger occurred. Lt Gorman agreed that everyone knew about it but that it has caused some unexpected animosity. Mr. Bouchard added that 2 new Lieutenants being promoted will be making more than the Lieutenants originally from Tiogue and Harris who have been Lieutenants for some time. Mr. LaColle stated the \$5,518.92 would be more like \$7,600 after adding pension & payroll tax costs. If we start Feb. 1st it would be \$6,700. Mr. Bouchard commented on the fact that is an issue of the rivalry and it creates almost as much of a problem as the money itself. Mr. Crowe asked if we can delay promotions till April. Mrs. Lapinski what if we change their pay and delay the promotions we'll spend some & save some. Delaying the promotions is not a significant savings. The 2 new guys were budgeted to start Jan 1st. They won't start till Feb 1st. There is approx \$5,000 budgeted that will not be used. The cost associated with raising pay

for the 8 guys is \$6,700. That's only \$1,700 we have to cover.

Mr. Bonn makes motion to approve the recommendation to up the 8 guys to the same pay scale as other employees starting with the paycheck on Feb 1st.

Motion: Joe Bonn Seconded: Linda Giguere

All Vote Aye

5. President's Report

Mr. Bouchard & Chief Seltzer met with the Coventry Fire District. The person representing their Board has changed due to the fact that the person has resigned from their Board. The new person is Gary Cote who is the Chairman of the CFD Board. Both Unions were represented at the meeting, Mr. Cote expressed some anxiety about them being there as he was unaware they would be present. The Unions were advised to start looking at what they would be looking for in a combined contract. There were some concerns raised about keeping employees & benefits as well as questions about tax rates. Things are moving very slowly but that is a better way to go with this type of issue. Mrs. Lapinski asked about the difference in pay scales.

Lt. Gorman said they are 17% higher than us. Mr. Bouchard suggested the possibility of locking their rates until our employees catch up to them. Lt Gorman commented that there is so much to discuss that they haven't considered where they want to go with any of these issues yet. Mr. Bouchard has several other issues that he thinks need to be resolved before we get to pay issues. Chief Seltzer

offered that some issues regarding officers may be resolved by officers at CFD retiring. Mr. Crowe asked if their Tax Rate is higher and their Budget is higher, what are they bringing to the table? Chief Seltzer answered that they don't have much to bring to the table but as a Fire Dept we have an obligation to all of the people of Coventry and if we can merge and fix some of the issues then we should do that. There are some inequities. Our employees are better trained and yet CFD employees are paid more. They have 13 Firefighters and 2 clerical that are full time. The Treasurer is part time. Mr. Gizzarelli asked if we approached them or they approached us? Mr. Bouchard replied that CFD had never responded to the letters sent regarding joining the merger. They approached us a few months ago to request starting to look into a merger. Mr. Bouchard feels that they have to resolve their Legal and Employment issues. Mr. Crowe asked if they hire a full time chief; what then? Chief Seltzer replied that we have to be open and up front with them that this person would not have a position in the merge. However it's hard to discuss issues like this because they don't know what they are going to do. Lt. Gorman commented that when we decide to merge the 4 districts there were a lot of issues that had to be dealt with but if we can work towards one fire district for the town that would be the best thing. Chief Seltzer said that in the long term there are definitely benefits just need to clean up the baggage. We understand what their problems are. They won't be able to hide them. Lt Gorman commented that they are funding themselves already so we could add 13 people with only a 17% increase in our payroll. We would never be able to hire 13 guys

off the street. The next meeting will be January 29th. Mr. Crowe asked if they are in a feasible situation operating as they are now without a full time Chief. Mr. Bouchard replied that it can be problematic. However, Chief Seltzer's services were offered for daytime operations while Chief Warren is at his regular employment. They didn't seem to be interested in the offer. The Board members are still on a learning curve. Chief Seltzer or Assist Chief Tucker go to many of the calls now because our guys often respond as mutual aid. Also Chief Warren responds to many of our calls as well.

No correspondence to report.

Motion: Robert Crowe Seconded: Elaine Hunt

All Vote Aye

6. Chief's Report

Chief presented his Report.

Under Administration

#7 – Chief Seltzer would like to set up a work session with the new Board members and any other Board members who would like to attend to give an overview of the Department. Chief will email or call Board members with several dates and times to find the best time for all. Tom LaColle will also be included to go over the Budget.

Mr. Crowe had a question about including members of the public on

the Fire Station Building Committee. Chief Seltzer replied that this was a committee to put together information on what we might need in a new fire station. Mr. Bouchard suggested a name change to better reflect the purpose of the committee. His suggestion was the Building Fact Finding Committee.

Mr. Bouchard asked about Assist Chief Tucker's Status. Chief Seltzer replied that Assist Chief Tucker has been working partial hours. The cast is off and he has been going to physical therapy. He is about 30 days ahead of schedule.

Chief Seltzer is waiting on some more info from other Chiefs to put together the Benefit package fro the Administrative Assistant / Human Resources position. He has 2 and is hoping to get 2-3 more to insure that we put together an appropriate package. Discussion regarding the Job Description will be addressed later on the Agenda.

Motion: Anna Mae Lapinski Seconded: Linda Giguere

All Vote Aye

7. Treasurer's Report

Mr. LaColle presented his report. The legal line item is payments that have been sent to John Comrey. He has been working with Mrs. Graemiger on the properties going for tax sale. This money has been collected from the delinquent taxpayers and will be reconciled with

Mrs. Graemiger and properly be shown as coming from tax collections. Ms. Lapinski & Mr. Gizzarelli thanked the Treasurer for the extensive report.

Motion: Ron Gizzarelli Seconded: Linda Giguere

All Vote Aye

8. Tax Collector's Report

Mrs. Graemiger presented her report. The differences in the numbers on the Tax Collectors report and the Treasurers report are due to timing. Mr. LaColle also adds that he has been to the Tax Collectors office a couple of times and the volume of mail they are handling is incredible and they are doing a great job getting it all processed.

Motion: Robert Crowe Seconded: Joe Bonn

All Vote Aye

9. New Business

Administrative/Human Resources Assistant job description & benefit package

Mr. Bouchard hopes all members have had a chance to look over the description Chief Seltzer provided at the last meeting. Mr. Bouchard feels that the position should be on the Management side due to the confidential nature of the HR issues this person would be dealing with.

Mrs. Hunt had a question regarding section 1.3. It seems to be a lot

of responsibility for an Administrative Assistant. She thought there should be something in the section about a final decision by the Chief. Chief Seltzer responded that this is one of the things this person would be responsible to oversee as part of the Human Resources aspect of the position but that the section could be modified to include her suggestion. Also in this section Mrs. Hunt asked for a clarification of the use of the word operations. Would this person need to have any specialized training? Chief Seltzer responded that operations referred to the operation of the Department, for example, who to forward things to.

Mr. Gizzarelli asked about making the Job Description flexible for the first year or two in order to take care of any issues that might arise after this person starts doing the job. Chief Seltzer replied that this would be the first job description for the consolidated district. He has put together some info for other positions nothing final yet. People need to know what is expected for each position and how to advance their career. Chief Seltzer believes that they should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Mrs. Hunt had a question regarding section 2.1 where it says quality control. Chief Seltzer replied that he was thinking along the lines of making sure that reports are completed and if they are not making sure it gets back to the right person to be completed. Now most reports are completed on the computer and can't be closed without all of the info. So this would be more like a watchdog to make sure

the reports are in. For instance when a request come in for a report this person would be able to go in to the system and print out the report. Mrs. Hall does this now.

Mrs. Hunt also asked if this would be a Union position. Mr. Bouchard thinks it would have to be a non-union position due to the confidential nature of the Human Resources aspect of the position.

Mr. Bonn asked if this was going to be advertised. Mr. Bouchard recommends posting the job as we do with any other job. It would probably be best to wait for benefits to be finalized.

Mr. Gizzarelli asked what kind of job security this position would have. Would there be a contract or just working at the will of the Board? Ms. Lapinski felt there should be a probationary period and then some type of structure. Mr. Crowe felt there should be a contract as with other employees. Mrs. Hunt asked if this was going to be a recommendation from the Chief or if the Board was going to hire someone. Chief Seltzer replied that there has been some discussion early on about the process for this position. Mrs. Hall has been working part time as Administrative Assistant and Clerk. Now that the info is almost all together the Board needs to decide on a course of action. If the Board decides to post the position Chief Seltzer recommends having interviews with himself, Assistant Chief Tucker and a member of the Board. Mr. Bouchard added that the Board has the position to hire people. The hiring process for this

position should be the same as other positions that the Board has voted on with the recommendation of the Chief. Mr. Crowe asked who this position would report to. Mr. Bouchard replied that the Chief would be the Boss for this position. Mrs. Hunt said as a new member she is not aware of the discussions that went on before but asked if you have someone already doing the job part time do we need to go outside sources and spend money to advertise. She added that she doesn't know weather Mrs. Hall wants to go full time or if there are any other candidates but it seemed sensible to her to go with someone in house. Mr. Bouchard replied that he was not aware of any other candidates and that there has been no discussion with Mrs. Hall as to weather she wants to go full time. Ms. Lapinski added that early on in the process we felt that it should be put out to anyone who wanted to apply including Mrs. Hall.

Mr. Gizzarelli asked about the Administrative Assistant also being Clerk and having to serve two masters. Mr. Bouchard replied that the two positions do not have to be done by one person. The Board chose to have Mrs. Hall has Clerk. Mr. Gizzarelli felt that it would be advantageous for Mr. Bouchard & Chief Seltzer to meet with Mrs. Hall to review the job description for her input. Mr. LaColle felt that it was not appropriate to have an employee involved with creating the job description. The Chief is putting together what he needs and if there was no current employee and a person was hired from outside that person would not have input into their job description. Mr. Gizzarelli replied that in his experience when you create a job description the

first thing you do is go out and talk to the person doing the job not to allow the employee to dictate what goes into the job description but insure you get a complete description. Chief Seltzer said that Mrs. Hall has already given him a list identifying the things she does. Some of them were things he had already identified and some he added. He also added that if Mrs. Hall wanted to review it and offer suggestions he is certainly open to that. Mrs. Hall has expressed interest in the position. This has been talked about but there were different feelings from the Board as to how to proceed. There was no decision made and that's where we are now.

Finding out the process the Board wants to use is important for Chief Seltzer. If the Board decides to post or not will change the timing of the situation as we do have limited funds for this year. Also when the benefits package is presented there is a lot of training involved as Mrs. Hall has discovered over the past year or so. The person in this position is someone you want to keep. In a couple years time this person will know a lot about how this place runs and he wants to be fair and equitable with the pay and benefits so this person will be long term asset to the department.

Ms. Lapinski asked if we were ready to post the job or not. Mr. Bouchard said we are not. Chief Seltzer felt the description should be finalized first. Mrs. Hunt asked if there was a legal reason to advertise the job when we have an in house candidate who is interested. Mr. Bouchard feels that we should stay open to the

public. He doesn't feel it would be good for the district to hire a full time employee with out advertising. It will avoid the appearance of favoritism.

Lt Gorman asked if being a personnel issue it would be appropriate for an executive session. Mrs. Hall replied as the discussion is not regarding a particular employee it does not fall with the executive session exceptions.

Ms. Lapinski made a motion to table the issue until all the facts are available.

Motion: Anna Mae Lapinski Seconded: Ron Gizzarelli

All Vote Aye

10. Introduction of new business to be considered at the next Board Meeting

11. Good & Welfare

Lt Gorman commented that as a Lt he sees that the Chief is always busy and that the faster the Board can get him a Full Time Assistant the better it would be for the Department. The Board agreed but also wants to make sure we get the job set before putting someone in it. Chief Seltzer commented that he wants to make sure we set it up so we gat a person who will be here for a long time.

Mr. Gizzarelli received a phone call from a reporter who asked about

the Board Election. He referred them to Chief Seltzer and wanted to know if Chief Seltzer was the appropriate person to send PR questions to. Mr. Bouchard said yes, Chief Seltzer is the Public Information Officer. If it is a question about Board business the Chief will contact the President and then get back to the person asking questions. Mr. Crowe commented that in his experience it's always best to refer things to the Chief or the President because things can change so quickly Board members don't always have contact to get the new information. Mr. Bonn commented that it's best to have one person be the contact so there is not a problem with many version of the same issue.

Mr. Gizzarelli also asked if the Board has any standing committees and how a board member goes about being on a committee. Mr. Bouchard replied that there are no standing committees. If there is one needed it is appointed at that time. If a member wants to be on a committee they only need to express their interest.

12. Adjournment – 9:03 pm

Motion: Robert Crowe Seconded: Anna Mae Lapinski

All Vote Aye